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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 UPW-01 IO-11 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02
INR-06 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14
USIA-12 RSR-01 /136 W
109220

R 241020Z SEP 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 356
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 15371

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: CAMBODIANS UNLIKELY TO TAKE PART IN ELECTION DEMONSTRATIONS

REF: A. SAIGON 15084
B. SAIGON 15047

1. SUMMARY: THE RELIGIOUS LEADER OF THE THERAVADA BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION, WHICH REPRESENTS ABOUT HALF OF THE ROUGHLY ONE MILLION CAMBODIANS IN SVN, TOLD US THE ASSOCIATION WILL NOT JOIN IN DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST PRESIDENT THIEU ON THE ELECTION ISSUE. HOWEVER, HIS REMARKS LEFT OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THE ASSOCIATION MIGHT HOLD SEPARATE DEMONSTRATIONS (INVOLVING ONLY BONZES) TO BACK UP ITS DEMAND FOR OFFICIAL ETHNIC MINORITY STATUS WHICH COULD REINFORCE THE EFFECT OF ELECTION ORIENTED DISTURBANCES.

END SUMMARY

2. REF A REPORTED MANIFESTO OF ETHNIC CAMBODIAN THERAVADA BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION (TBA) CONDEMNING LOWER HOUSE ELECTION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Dyalbert DATE 1/26/92
RDS☐ or XDS☐ EXT. DATE _____
TS AUTH. _____ REASON(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☑ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____

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IN VINH BINH AND BACK LIEU, EXPRESSING DETERMINATION TO STRUGGLE FOR ETHNIC MINORITY STATUS FOR CAMBODIANS RESIDING IN SVN AND REJECTING THE ONE-SLATE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

3. THE VENERABLE KIM SANG, RELIGIOUS LEADER OF THE TBA, TOLD EMBOFF SEPT 24 THAT ABOUT 150 BONZES FROM 14 PROVINCES IN THE DELTA HAD ASSEMBLED AT THE CAMBODIAN CHIEF PAGODA IN SAIGON FOR A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY SEPT 19, AND THAT THESE BONZES ARE STILL IN SAIGON; AND HENCE WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR DEMONSTRATIONS. HOWEVER, KIM SANG STRESSED REPEATEDLY THAT THE PRINCIPAL AIM OF THE TBA IS TO ATTAIN OFFICIAL ETHNIC MINORITY STATUS, AND THE ELECTIONS ARE SECONDARY. KIM SANG ASSERTED THAT HE WOULD NOT TAKE PART IN ANY JOINT DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND THAT THE TBA MAY DEMONSTRATE FOR ETHNIC MINORITY STATUS BUT IT WILL DEMONSTRATE BY ITSELF. IF PRESIDENT THIEU WERE TO PROMISE TO GRANT ETHNIC MINORITY STATUS THEN THE TBA WOULD VOTE FOR HIM, BUT SO FAR THERE IS NO INDICATION THIEU HAS CHANGED HIS POSITION.

4. KIM SANG ATTACKED THE RIGGING OF THE ELECTIONS IN VINH BINH AND BAC LIEU (REF B), AND SHOWED EMBOFF DOSSIERS SIGNED BY CAMBODIANS IN THESE TWO PROVINCES WHICH WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE LOWER HOUSE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN CONNECTION WITH VALIDATION OF THOSE ELECTIONNS. KIM SANG CONFIRMED EMPHATICALLY CLAIM OF LOSING BAC LIEU DEPUTY DUONG VAN BA (REF B) THAT LOCAL COURT IN BAC LIEU HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT COMPLAINTS, SAYING COURT HAD REFUSED COMPLAINTS FROM BOTH BA AND TBA-SUPPORTED LOSING INCUMBENT THACH PHEN WHO RAN FOR THE CAMBODIANS SEAT IN BAC LIEU.

5. COMMENT: IMPLICATION OF KIM SANG'S REMARKS ON DEMONSTRATIONS IS THAT THE TBA IS UNLIKELY TO ENDANGER ITS CHANCES OF GETTING ETHNIC MINORTIY STATUS FROM PRESIDENT THIEU BY TAKING PART IN AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT FRONT AGAINST THE ELECTION NOW. IT WOULD APPEAR IN INTEREST OF TBA TO JOING AN ANTI-THIEU MOVEMENT ONLY IF IT APPEARED THAT MOVEMENT WOULD IN FACT RESULT IN THIEU'S REMOVAL AND THE INSTALLATION IN THE PRESIDENCY OF SOMEONE MORE LIKELY TO GRANT THE DESIRED ETHNIC MINORITY STATUS. HOWEVER, KIM SANG'S REMARKS LEAVE OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE TBA COULD MOUNT A SEPARATE DEMONSTRATION ON THE MINORITY STATUS ISSUE WHICH COULD REINFORCE THE IMPACT OF ANTI-ELECTION DISTURBANCES BY OTHER GROUPS. ANY TBA DEMONSTRATION

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WOULD PROBABLY INVOLVE ONLY BONZES, AS IN 1969-70.
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